

Rabies Bait Drop

Research Project

Raccoon rabies was confirmed in southern Vermont in June 1994. Since that time, hundreds of cases of animal rabies have been confirmed as the outbreak has spread northward. With this rabies bait drop project, research veterinarians and wildlife biologists from Cornell University are trying to keep raccoon rabies from spreading across the Vermont/Canadian border. The first bait drop took place in May 1997.



This eighth bait drop will begin in late August, weather permitting, in:

Caledonia County	Hardwick, Sutton, Burke, Wheelock, Stannard, Walden, Sheffield, Lyndon, Kirby
Chittenden County	Milton, Westford, Underhill, Colchester, Burlington, South Burlington, Winooski, Essex, Essex Junction, Williston, Jericho, Richmond, Bolton, Shelburne, St George
Essex County	Bloomfield, Brighton, Brunswick, Canaan, Ferdinand, Granby, Lemington, Lewis, Maidstone, Norton, Warren Gore, Warner's Grant, Victory, Concord, Lunenburg, Guildhall
Franklin County	all towns
Grand Isle County	all towns
Lamoille County	all towns
Orleans County	all towns
New Hampshire	several towns in Coos County

How will the bait drop be conducted?

Vaccine, in the form of fish-scented bait, will be dropped from aircraft in rural areas and placed by hand in large residential areas, at the rate of 155 baits per square mile. Airplanes and pilots from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, flying out of the Stowe/Morrisville airport, will drop bait from an altitude of about 500 feet. The copilot will be controlling the "on/off" switch to keep the bait from dropping on roadways, houses, people, etc. In more densely populated areas such as Burlington and St. Albans City, teams of two people will place the bait by hand out of obvious sight (under bushes or leaves, at a tree line, etc.)

When will the bait drop begin and how long will it last?

This bait drop will begin sometime in August, depending on weather conditions and other factors. Once begun, the air drop will last about three days; hand placement will take up to a week. Times and locations of the bait drop will be publicized in advance through the local media. (over)

Questions? Vermont Rabies Hotline: 1-800-4-RABIES (1-800-472-2437)

Will this project get rid of rabies?

NO! This project will not get rid of rabies. This research project is simply an experiment to see whether a raccoon population in a given geographical area can be vaccinated with a bait drop, and to find out which methods are most effective. Therefore, all usual precautions against rabies must still be taken: vaccinate all pets, including cats, keep a healthy distance from wild animals, and call your doctor right away if you are bitten or get animal saliva in a cut, eyes, nose, or mouth.

Who is conducting the research?

The project is an interstate/international cooperative effort. The research will be directed by the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University. The other partners include the Vermont Departments of Health and Fish & Wildlife; Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets; and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Wildlife Services (which operates the Vermont Rabies Hotline); the Quebec Dept. of Health; the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; and the New York State Dept. of Health.

What is the bait made of, and what does it look like?

Two types of bait will be used. One type of bait is made of fish meal, a binder, and fish oil in the form of a hard brown pellet about 1-1/4" square in size. Inside is a vaccine chamber, which is filled with the rabies vaccine. This bait will be placed by hand. The other bait contains the same ingredients and will be distributed by plane. The air-dropped baits are flat, clear packets about 3/4" by 2" in size with an oily coating. The manufacturer has printed a toll-free number on each bait, so that anyone finding a bait can call for information. Vermont callers will be forwarded to the Vermont Rabies Hotline, 1-800-472-2437.

Is the bait harmful to children or pets?

Millions of baits have been dropped in New York and Canada, with no ill effects reported in people or pets. Even if you are exposed to the vaccine, you cannot get rabies from it. While the bait is not harmful to children, pets or other wildlife, it should not be handled or disturbed, so that it can be eaten by raccoons. However, if your dog picks up a bait, do not risk getting bitten by trying to remove the bait from the dog's mouth.

Will the bait attract raccoons or other animals to my property?

No, the bait will not attract raccoons or other animals to your property. However, any raccoons that are already using the property will come across the baits.

Can I get bait to spread around my property?

You cannot get bait to spread around your property since this is research, which must be conducted in a controlled and scientific manner. The bait is licensed by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture for use by federal and state agencies.

If I am bitten or scratched by a raccoon, should I assume that it does not have rabies since it probably ate the bait?

NO! Every raccoon bite or scratch must be considered a potential rabies exposure. There is no way to tell if a raccoon was exposed to the disease prior to eating the bait. Call your doctor right away if you are bitten or get animal saliva in a cut, eyes, nose or mouth.

What should I do if I find a bait?

If you find a bait, do not disturb it. Keep children away. If your pet eats a bait or your pet or child brings home, call the Vermont Rabies Hotline 1-800-472-2437 (toll free in Vermont) to report it.